



## CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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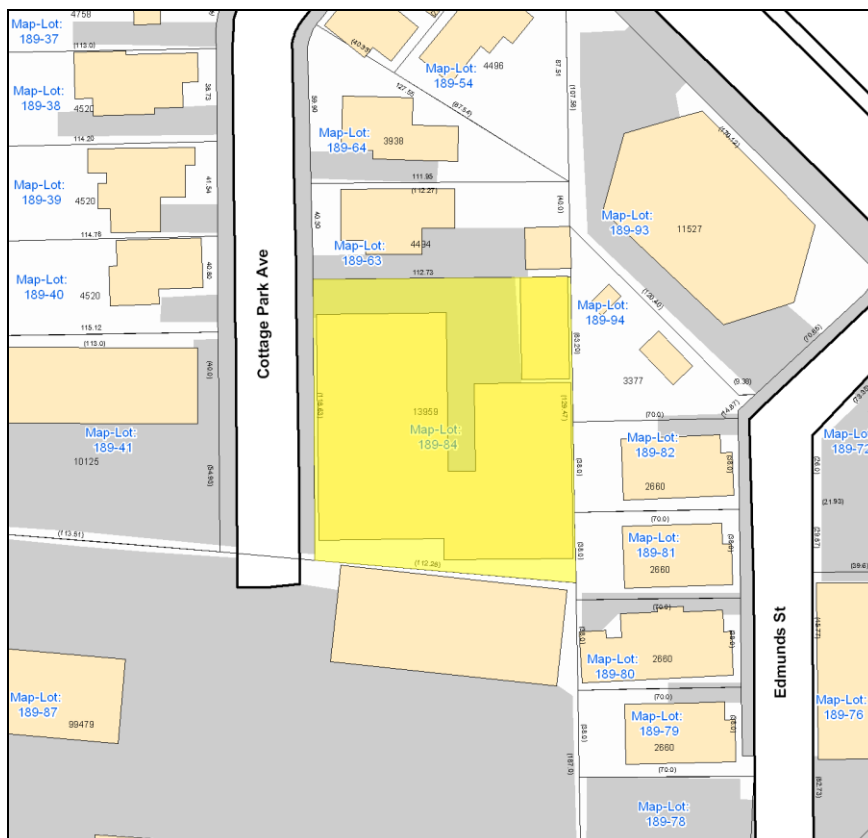
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Date: May 28, 2010  
To: Members of the Historical Commission  
From: Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner  
Re: L-95: 22 Cottage Park Avenue (J. H. Emerson Co.)  
Petitioned for Landmark Designation Study

### Background

The property at 22 Cottage Park Avenue is located on the east side of this dead end street, south of Massachusetts Avenue in North Cambridge. A petition was received on May 24 to consider initiating a landmark study of the property. The petition has been forwarded to the Elections Commission for verification of the signatures. Four connected structures are located on the lot (Map 189/Parcel 84). The site consists of a total of 13,959 sf (1/3 acre), with a gross square footage for the building assessed as 35,058 sf. The total assessed value for the land and buildings according to the online database is \$2,786,700. The lot is partially within a Business A-2 zoning district (business, neighborhood retail, office, and residential uses) and partially within the Special District 2.



22 Cottage Park Ave, Cambridge GIS, May 2010



22 Cottage Pk St (sic), Cambridge Assessors Database

A recent proposal for office use and a commercial bakery was presented for review, but the current status of this proposal is not known.

### Landmark Criteria and Goals

Landmarks are enacted by the City Council upon recommendation of the Historical Commission. The Commission commences a landmark designation study process by its own initiative or by voting to accept a petition of ten registered voters. The Commission may decline to accept petitions that do not meet the criteria for landmark designation.

The criteria provided in the ordinance outlines eligible properties as:

any property within the city being or containing a place, structure, feature, or object which it determines to be either (1) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the City or the Commonwealth or (2) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures...(2.78.180.A)

The purpose of landmark designation is described in the ordinance, which was enacted to,

preserve, conserve and protect the beauty and heritage of the City and to improve the quality of its environment through identification, conservation and maintenance of neighborhoods, sites and structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or

social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose; to foster appropriate use and wider public knowledge and appreciation of such neighborhoods, areas, or structures; and by furthering these purposes to promote the public welfare by making the city a more desirable place in which to live and work. (2.78.140)

### Relationship to Criteria

The Climax Paper Box Company constructed the three-story (plus basement) brick factory in 1909. It was designed by architect William P. Richards. Other buildings pre-dated this main structure, including a shop (1891) and a stable/shed (1908), but neither appears to survive. The 1909 factory is closest to the street and behind it is another three-story brick building (1912) constructed by the C.R.G. Bond Co. and designed by architect S. A. Joslin. Two concrete block storage garages (1930) were constructed at the rear for the Boston Safe Deposit Co.

The J. H. Emerson Company, manufacturers of resuscitation and hospital equipment, occupied the building by 1937. The company was founded by John Haven Emerson, a descendant of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He founded the company in 1928 and began selling physicians' supplies at 15 Brattle Street. He moved his company and residence to the building at 22 Cottage Park Avenue between 1931 and 1937. Emerson invented an iron lung device for treating polio patients, and he won a patent case against Harvard University in the 1930s. (Mass High Tech: The Journal of New England Technology, May 14, 2007). The company continued operations at 22 Cottage Park Avenue until his sons sold the company in 2007 to a Respironics, Inc., a Pennsylvania company which relocated the manufacturing of the popular CoughAssist device to Georgia. Prior to the company's sale, the J. H. Emerson Co. employed approximately 17 people in Cambridge. (MHT, May 14, 2007).

The 1909 factory is an example of classic mill construction with brick piers delineating the ten bays on the façade. Divided light double hung sash, with round arched tops, occupy each bay.

The J. H. Emerson Company also owned a lot across the street at 23-25 Cottage Park Avenue, where it erected a Quonset hut in 1946 with a temporary variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals. The Quonset hut is a rare building form in Cambridge, and due to the expired variance, it is anticipated that a demolition permit application may be filed in the near future. Such a permit application would be subject to the demolition delay procedures for buildings over 50 years old.

### Staff Recommendations

It is the staff opinion that the property at 22 Cottage Park Avenue is eligible for landmark designation under criterion (1) for its associations with the broad cultural, economic, and social history of the city due to the prominent role of the company in the medical device field and its direct associations with Cambridge inventor, John H. Emerson and significant under criterion (2) for its architectural significance in terms of the period and mill construction style of the factory, a rare example in the North Cambridge neighborhood. The staff is aware of no immediate threats to the 1909 brick factory building. The staff recommends that the Commission hear testimony from the petitioners and representatives of the owner and/or redeveloper before voting on initiation of a landmark designation study for the property.

cc: Richard D. Clarey  
James J. Rafferty